

SECOND
ANNUAL REPORT
OF
THE SANITARY CONDITION
OF THE

BOSTON

Urban Sanitary District,

For the Year 1896,

BY

ARTHUR TUXFORD, M.D. (EDIN.).

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.



BOSTON :
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REPORT.

MR. MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN,

EVERY month during the past year I have presented to you an accurate statement of the health of the inhabitants of this Borough, with the number of births, deaths, and notifications of infectious diseases. I have now to give you a summary of the above (with Government tables), a copy of which has to be forwarded to the Local Government Board, Whitehall, and to the Holland County Council.

In 1891, Boston contained 3796 houses, and had a population of 14,444; in 1897 it has 4048 houses, and a population exceeding 15,000.

BIRTHS.—The number of births registered in the Urban Sanitary District of Boston during the year 1896 was 443, viz., 226 males and 217 females, giving a birth-rate of 29.533 per 1000—the highest for many years; the birth-rates being for the years

1889	...	...	...	28.0	per 1000
1890	...	...	...	25.0	"
1891	...	...	...	26.	"
1892	...	...	...	26.0	"
1893	...	...	...	25.	"
1894	...	...	...	26.4	"

showing an increase of 3.533 per 1000 over the stationary birth-rate of 26., which was quoted by the late Medical Officer as being the average for some years.

ILLEGITIMACY.—Of these births, no less than 48 were illegitimate, showing a percentage of 10.835, or of 1.83 for every ten births.

DEATHS.—The number of deaths in the town was 270, in the Boston Union Workhouse 29, and in the Hospital 11, total 310; making a death-rate of 20.666 per thousand. Excluding the Union Workhouse and Hospital, there is a death-rate for the true Urban Sanitary District of 18. per 1000, which is very heavy, and equal to the total death-rate (town, workhouse, and hospital) reported by Mr. Clegg for the year 1894, especially as the year 1896 was, like that of 1894, unusually healthy.

Of these deaths, 60 were under one year, representing an infantile death-rate of 135.44 per 1000 births registered; 41 had attained to the age of 60 and upwards; 47 had reached 70 and upwards; 28 had reached 80 and upwards; and 5 were over 90 years of age, the oldest registered death being 94; while 2 were registered as having lived one minute.

The *highest* rate of mortality was during the weeks ending February 22nd and March 7th, 11 deaths being registered in each of those weeks. The *lowest* rate was reached during the week ending October 17th, when only one death was registered.

CAUSES OF DEATH.—From diseases under the “Infectious Diseases Notification Act” there were 5 deaths, viz., 4 from typhoid fever and 1 from choleraic diarrhoea—*un-notified*. From whooping cough, which ought to be included in the Notification Act, 3 deaths were registered. *Constitutional Diseases*: From phthisis (consumption) there were 29 deaths; from cerebral diseases, as apoplexy, meningitis, paralysis, epilepsy, and convulsions, there were 57; from diseases of the lungs there were 52. *Local*

Diseases : from heart disease 31 ; from diseases of the liver 10 ; from cancer 13 ; cystitis 2 ; gastric paraplegia 1 ; influenza 3 ; recurrent influenza 1 ; cyanosis neonatorum 1 ; renal diseases 8 ; ventral hernia 1 ; hernia 3 ; Hodgkin's disease 1 ; chronic alcoholism 2 ; mal development 3 ; diabetes 1 ; aneurism of aorta 1 ; enteritis 1 ; disease of prostate 1. *Developmental* : Premature births 5 ; old age 17 ; marasmus 10 ; accidents and suicides 8.

The ~~average~~ annual death-rate from infectious diseases was 0.333 per thousand.

“NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.”—There were 110 notifications of infectious diseases during the year, as shown in the following table :—

1896.	Scarlet Fever.	Erysipelas.	Typhoid Fever.	Diphtheria.
January	8	3	...	3
February	14	3	1	1
March	5	...	...	1
April	1	1	...	1
May	10	2	...	...
June	8	3	...	...
July	7	1	1	1
August	3	2	4*	1
September ...	4	...	...	1
October	3	4	3	...
November.....	...	1	2	1
December.....	4*	2	...	...
Total.....	67	22	11	10

* One imported.

The greatest number of *Scarlet Fever* cases was notified in February (14). The disease seemed to run a steady course throughout the year, with the exception of the months of November, when there was no notification, and

April, with only one ; and in December there were only four notifications received. It will be gratifying to you to know that there was not a single death registered from scarlet fever.

Erysipelas. The number of notifications (22) seemed to be large, but the cases generally were of a mild type. There was no death registered from this disease.

Diphtheria. There were 10 notifications, three of which occurred in one house. They were all of an exceptionally mild character, and no death was registered from this disease.

Typhoid Fever. There were 11 notifications and 4 deaths—a very heavy death rate. Four of these notifications were in August, when there were 2 deaths registered from this disease. Six of these cases were distinctly traceable to sewer gas, and had nothing to do with any defective sanitary arrangements on the part of the Urban Sanitary Authority. One case was imported from Grimsby. One case was traced to the occupier of the house drinking impure water from a cistern in the house. I examined the water, and found it unwholesome and unsuitable for drinking purposes, either for man or animal, and I ordered the cistern to be closed. It seems astonishing, but nevertheless it is true, that many persons prefer drinking impure to pure water, which is close at their doors. No cause could be ascertained for the remaining cases, the houses being clean, well drained, and the drinking water excellent.

The Infectious Diseases Notification Act having been adopted in this district, it is to be presumed that its requirements should be strictly attended to. I would, therefore, mention that I do not consider that certificates of death from infectious disease take the place of notifications. I would also add that, under the Act, "every

medical practitioner attending, or called in to visit, the patient, shall forthwith, on becoming aware that the patient is suffering from an infectious disease, intimate the same to the Medical Officer of Health." This time of becoming aware seems to vary from one to thirty days, the latter being an exceptionally long time for diagnosing any infectious disease.

Isolation in many cases seems to be an unknown quantity, and notification without isolation becomes a dead letter, and *vice versa*.

In May, a house in St. John's Close was closed as being unfit for human habitation ; and in the same month three houses in Fy dell Street were reported to the Sanitary Authority as being unfit for habitation. Upon examining them, they were found in a perfectly habitable condition, and passed accordingly.

Numerous, and reasonable, complaints were made during the summer of the nauseous stenches arising from the sewer ventilators in the streets. The complaints were fully discussed at the meeting of the Sanitary Authority, and various suggestions for the abatement were made, but nothing of a satisfactory nature was arrived at, it being conclusively proved that if the outlet of the gas were stopped it would find its way back into the houses, and cause not only more smells but naturally tend to produce fevers. With regard to the drainage of the town, I think it prudent at present to abstain from making any remarks, as the time is fast approaching when an entirely fresh scheme of drainage will have to be undertaken. At the same time, I regret that the new houses built on Brothertoft Road and neighbourhood are below the level of the town sewers, and the owners are therefore compelled to drain into cesspools, which must inevitably become an intolerable nuisance and danger.

During the current year application was twice made for the erection of a slaughter-house in a densely populated district. The application was opposed by the Sanitary Authority, as the number already in existence is 32 ; thus showing the necessity for a public slaughter-house, as advocated by myself some years ago when Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, and since recommended by your late officer, Mr. Clegg, namely :

- (1) To provide for the best modes of slaughter by which the least possible pain is inflicted consistently with the due preparation of the meat for human consumption.
- (2) A system of efficient inspection of the animals before they are killed, and of the meat before it is sent to the market, by qualified veterinary surgeons.
- (3) The means of improving existing arrangements for conveying meat by train in refrigerating chambers from agricultural districts to centres of population, and storing it at low temperatures under the direction of the local authorities, thus avoiding the meat being rendered unwholesome by varying conditions of climate.

I earnestly beg the serious attention of the Sanitary Authority to the above suggestions, as in no town is there more need of an "abattoir" than at Boston. During the year one of the slaughter-house owners was proceeded against on account of the insanitary condition of his slaughter-house, the result being that he was convicted and fined.

THE FEVER HOSPITAL.—During the year there were admitted into the Fever Hospital nine cases of scarlet fever, and one of "*infectious pneumonia*." There has been no death in the hospital during the year.

I have to thank the Sanitary Committee (and particularly the chairman (whom I have occasionally had to consult without his colleagues) for their great courtesy to me; and my thanks are also especially due to Mr. Stephenson, the Sanitary Inspector.

ARTHUR TUXFORD, M.D. (EDIN.),
Medical Officer of Health.

*12, Wide Bargate, Boston,
January 18th, 1897.*

Nuisances abated and Works carried out by the
Sanitary Inspector for the Borough of Boston,

For the Year ending 31st Dec., 1896.

—o—

Defective drains remedied	...	...	...	...	63
Drains trapped	...	...	...	...	37
Defective privies repaired	...	...	...	...	4
Offensive privies converted into earth closets	...				41
Defective ash closets repaired	...	...	...	...	11
Offensive piggeries removed or remedied	...				15
Offensive privies converted into water closets	...				2
Defective water closets repaired and ventilated					6
Bakehouse chimney raised	...	...	...	...	1
Offensive deposit of fish refuse removed	...				1
Filthy yards repaved or asphalted	...	...	...	...	4
Drains relaid with sanitary pipes	...	...	...	...	9
House unfit for habitation closed	...	...	...	...	1
Ash closets erected for more accommodation}					
under Factory Act	...	...	...	...	2
Filthy house cleaned and limewashed	...	...	...	...	1
Tripe boiling on unlicensed premises stopped	...				1
Dilapidated house repaired	...	...	...	...	1
New house drain constructed	...	...	...	...	1
Boiling fish refuse prohibited	...	...	...	...	2
Horse kept in slaughter-house removed	...				1
Fowls kept in small yards removed & premises cleaned					2
Pigs kept in cow stables removed	...	...	...	...	2
Cesspools filled up	...	...	...	...	2
Offensive cellar filled up	...	...	...	...	1

Works outstanding and in course of completion	...	8
Houses fumigated and disinfected—		
For scarlet fever	...	48
For diphtheria	...	3
	—	51
Caravan disinfected	...	1
Summons taken out during the year as follows—		
Under bye-laws	...	4

JOHN STEPHENSON,

Inspector of Nuisances.

14th January, 1897.

A. W. BADDELEY,
PRINTER,
HIGH STREET, BOSTON.

